

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8949

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PASS AGRICULTURE FOR GRAIN & FEED AND LIVESTOCK & PRODUCTS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, CZ

SUBJECT: AGRICULTURE SITUATION IN SLOVAKIA

1. AGATT MET WITH DEPUTY MINISTER NEMETH OF SLOVAK MINISTRY AGRICULTURE IN BRATISLAVA SEPT. 29. NEMETH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CROP AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION. THE REGION PRODUCES ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF ALL GRAIN PRODUCED IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND 90 PERCENT OF ITS CORN. FOLLOWING MAJOR POINTS EMERGED FROM THIS MEETING:
2. NEMETH SAID AT ONSET EARLIER EXPECTATIONS FOR GOOD TO EXCELLENT GRAIN CROP DID NOT FULLY MATERIALIZE IN SLOVAKIA BECAUSE HEAVY RAINS DURING HARVEST. HOWEVER REPORTS HEAVY LOSSES WERE OVERSTATED. HE BELIEVES SLOVAKIA WHICH SET OUT GOAL PRODUCING 3.6 MIL. TONS GRAIN IN 1975 MAY STILL COME CLOSE TO IT.
3. WHILE SMALL GRAIN HARVEST DURING JULY DID NOT REACHED HOPED FOR 3 MIL. TONES, ONLY BETWEEN 2.6 TO 2.7 MIL

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WERE HARVESTED, CORN CROP WHICH NOW UNDER HARVEST

LOOKS GOOD TO EXCELLENT. YIELDS 60 QUINTALS PER HECTARE ARE COMMON AND 800,000 TONS CORN CROP OR MORE CAN BE EXPECTED. THIS CORN PLUS GRAIN ALREADY IN BINS COULD STILL NEAR THE GOAL OF 3.6 MIL TONS FOR REGION.

4. SLOVAKIA'S PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT GRAIN PRODUCTION (FOR MINISTRY'S INTERNAL USE ONLY) WERE MADE SEPT. 1 WHILE THOSE FOR CZECHLAND, BECAUSE OF LATER HARVEST, WILL BE MADE OCT 1. NEMETH COULD NOT COMMENT AUTHORITATIVELY ON CZECH CONDITIONS BUT JUDGING WHAT HIS CZECH SOLLEGUES SAID, CZECHLAND HAD ALSO DISAPPOINTING GRAIN HARVEST. SLOVAKIA, NEMETH SAID, IS SOMEWHAT IN BETTER POSITION NOW THAN THEIR CZECH BROTHERS. WITH CORN CROP NOW BEING HARVESTED SLOVAKIA CAN STILL HOPE APPROACH GOAL 3.6 MIL. TONS, FOR GOOD CORN HARVEST CAN OFFSET MUCH LOSS IN SMALL GRAIN HARVEST. IN CZECHLAND DISAPPOINTING SMALL GRAIN HARVEST ALREADY IN AND THAT'S IT*

5. IN DISCUSSING GRAIN HARVEST SITUATION FOR WHOLE CZECHOSLOVAKIA, NEMETH SAID HE WOULD MISLEAD AGATT IF HE USED SPECIFIC FIGURES. HE DID IMPLY, HOWEVER, THAT WHEN OFFICIAL FEDERAL GRAIN REPORT FIGURES FOR 1975 ARE RELEASED ON NOV 1, THEY SHOULD NOT BE TOO FAR OFF FROM 10 MIL. TONS FOR ENTIRE NATION.

6. SUGARBEET HARVEST WAS ALSO IN PROGRESS. CROP LOOKS GOOD AND PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES PLACE AVERAGE YIELDS IN 40 TON PER HECTARE AREA, ABOVE LAST YEAR'S YIELD. MOREOVER, SUGAR CONTENT THIS YEAR'S CROP IS ALSO HIGHER.

7. SLOVAKIA, WHICH PRODUCES NEARLY ALL SOYBEANS IN COUNTRY, HAD 20,000 HECTARES PLANTED TO THIS CROP. (THIS SEEMS SOMEWHAT HIGH BASED ON AVAILABLE INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES.) HE WAS VERY PLEASED WITH RESULTS BECAUSE YIELDS AVERAGE 18 TO 20 QUINTALS PER HECTARE.

8. NEMETH ASKED WHAT CROP SITUATION IN U.S. WAS. AGATT CITED FIGURES RELEASED EARLIER (SEPT. 1 LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONDITION) AND SAID WILL HAVE BETTER PICTURE CROP SITUATION WHEN NEW ESTIMATES ARE RELEASED OCT. 11. NEMETH WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN U.S. SOYBEAN AND MEAL SUPPLY SITUATION AND WONDERED ABOUT POSSIBILITY ANOTHER U.S. EMBARGO ON EXPORTS. AGATT REPLIED HE HAD NO INFORMATION ON ANY PLANS FOR EMBARGO AND SAID LARGE U.S. SOYBEAN CROP SHOULD CONTINUE BENEFIT TRADITIONAL CUSTOMERS ABROAD.

9. NEMETH ALSO SAID SLOVAKIA HAD GOOD BEAN, PEA AND LENTIL HARVEST TOO, WHICH WAS AIDED TREMENDOUSLY BY NEWLY PURCHASED 15 SPECIALLY EQUIPPED U.S. HARVESTERS FOR THESE CROPS.

10. SLOVAKIA SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING INTRODUCTION HEREFORDS INTO ITS CENTRAL SLOVAKIAN REGION WHICH IS RICH IN PASTURE. NEMETH, WHO RECENTLY VISITED HUNGARY, WAS VERY IMPRESSED WITH HORTOBAGY STATE FARM WHICH BOUGHT LARGE NUMBER HEREFORDS FROM U.S. OVER PAST YEAR. HE SAID IF HORTOBAGY CAN MAINTAIN SUCH GOOD STOCK ON ITS POOR, DRY AND RUGGED PLAINS SLOVAKIA SHOULD DO BETTER BECAUSE ITS PASTURE IS MORE ABUNDANT. SLOVAKIA NOW DEVELOPING PLANS GET HEREFORD HEIFERS OVER, BUT THIS MUST WAIT UNTIL FOREIGN EXCHANGE BECOMES AVAILABLE. HE SAID SOME PEOPLE AT FEDERAL LEVEL HAVE ALREADY TOURED U.S. AND HAVE ESTABLISHED CONTACTS WITH HEREFORD INTERESTS. WHEN AGATT REMARKED HE HOPED BY TIME THESE CATTLE ARE READY FOR SHIPMENT ALL ANIMAL HEALTH REGULATION PROBLEMS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL BE SETTLED, NEMETH REMARKED THIS HIS LEAST CONCERN, SINCE VETERINARY INSPECTION SERVICE COMES UNDER HIS JURISDICTION.

11. COMMENTS. ALTHOUGH MUCH WHAT NEMETH HAD TO SAY ABOUT CROP SITUATION HAS ALREADY BEEN HINTED IN VARIOUS NEWS MEDIA PREVIOUSLY (WITHOUT SPECIFIC FIGURES), HIS APPRAISAL OF SLOVAK HARVEST SITUATION MAY BE OVER OPTIMISTIC. HIS REMARKS ON HEREFORDS HOWEVER ARE OF SPECIAL INTEREST U.S. IF SLOVAKIA SUCCEEDS IN IMPORTATION HEREFORD CATTLE IT WILL BE REAL BREAK-THROUGH IN OUR "CATTLE RELATIONS" WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA. THE SLOVAK REGION, BEING SO CLOSE TO HUNGARY, IS KEEPING WATCHFUL EYE ON WHAT NEIGHBORS ARE DOING. SLOVAKIA MUCH IMPRESSED WITH HUNGARIAN SUCCESS IN DEVELOPING MODERN AND SEPARATE CATTLE INDUSTRY FOR MILK AND BEEF. SO SLOVAKIA MAY BE READY TAKE FIRST STEP IN THIS DIRECTION TOO, WHICH SOON MAY SPILL OVER INTO CZECH LANDS.
PERRY

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